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LETTER
From a
Member of the SOCIETY,
For Promoting
Christian Knowledge
IN
LONDON,
TO HIS
Friend in the Country,
Newly chosen a Corre-
sponding Member of that So-
ciety.

L O N D O N :

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near West-Smithfield. 1709.



A
LETTER, &c.

S I R,

IT is with no little Pleasure I hear of the good Opinion you have conceived of the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, and of the great Satisfaction you express in being chosen a *Corresponding Member* thereof; I doubt not, but you will be still more and more pleased as you become better acquainted with the Designs they are engaged in, and the Methods they take to make them effectual; which, because at present, I believe, you are not thoroughly acquainted with, I thought it not amiss to give you a short Account of the Rise and Progress of this Society, and of the Success it has pleased God to give to
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their pious Endeavours; and this I am the more induced to, in hopes, that what I shall communicate on this Occasion, may suggest to you some Hints, that probably will be of Use to you in carrying on the same good Work in your own Neighbourhood.

But as I am very well assured you are a hearty Well-wisher to every thing, that tends to the Advancement of God's Glory, I doubt not, but you'll pardon me, if before I enter upon what I principally aim at, I detain you so long, as to lay before you an Account of some other Societies, which have been set up of late Years, in and about the City of *London*, who, by different Methods, are endeavouring to promote the same Ends, (*viz.*) the Interest of Religion, and the Good of Souls.

I need not, I believe, tell you, That the Religious and Virtuous Part of this Nation have for a long Time complain'd of the infamous Clubs of *Atheists*, *Deists*, and *Soci-nians*, who for many Years past
have,

his I have, with an uncommon Zeal, laboured to propagate their pernicious Principles, and thereby have endeavoured, either to undermine the Truth of the revealed Religion, or to disparage the Mysteries of our holy Faith: It was this, that excited some, that had a true Concern for the Honour of God, to form themselves also into *Societies*, that so by their united Zeal, and Endeavours, they might oppose the Mischief of such dangerous Principles, and fortifie both themselves and others against the Attempts of those Sons of Darknefs, who make it their Business to root out (if possible) the very Notions of divine things, and all Differences of Good and Evil.

Accordingly about 30 Years ago, a considerable Number of pious Persons of the Church of *England* met frequently together to pray, sing Psalms, and read the Holy Scriptures, and to reprove, exhort, and edifie one another by their religious Conferences; and their Number have since so encreased, that they make at present about Forty

Societies, in and about *London* and *Westminster*. This Example hath been followed by several devout Persons in divers other Parts of this Nation, as also in *Ireland*, particularly in *Dublin*, where there are several of these Societies, encouraged by the Bishops and inferior Clergy there.

These Societies, and their Methods and Orders, were inquired into, and approved by our late QUEEN of blessed Memory, and the late Archbishop *Tillotson*, and Bishop *Stillingfleet*, and are greatly esteemed by several others of our Bishops and Clergy, who have made the same Enquiry: And these are the Societies, which are particularly called, The **Religious Societies**; whose charitable Designs are described, and recommended in a pious Discourse by the Reverend Doctor *Josiah Woodward*, entitled, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London, &c.*

These Societies have been very instrumental in promoting in some Churches Daily Prayers, Preparatory

ry Sermons to the Holy Communion, the Administration of the Sacrament every Lord's-Day and Holy-Day, and many other excellent Designs conformable to the Doctrine and Constitution of the Church of *England*; which have not a little contributed to promote Religion, particularly among those of the younger sort.

But as the private Devotions and exemplary Lives of the Members of these Societies were not sufficient to stop the Torrent of Vice which had broken in upon us: About Eighteen Years since, Five or Six private Gentlemen, Members of the Church of *England*, considering that the higher the Tide of Wickedness run, the more need there was of opposing it, agreed to set up a **Society for Reformation of Manners**, by promoting the Execution of the Laws against Vice and Immorality; and this Design, tho' at first violently opposed by the Advocates of Debauchery, yet by the divine Assistance, the Patronage of their late Majesties, *King William*

and *Queen Mary*, the Countenance of many of the Clergy, particularly of his Grace the late Lord *Archbishop of Canterbury*, and by the Zeal and Industry of the Persons engaged therein (most of which are Men of considerable Rank and Fortune; as *Members of Parliament, Justices of the Peace, Lawyers, and eminent Citizens*) hath prospered to a Degree exceedingly great, beyond what humane Wisdom did, or could expect; for this Design encountring no Man's honest Advantage, no ways intermeddling in Matters of Controversie; and the executive Part being managed by such, who have constantly refused even such Share of the Forfeitures on Convictions, as the Law allows to Informers, lest they should seem to aim at their own private Advantage; many virtuous good People of the Protestant Dissenters, as well as of the Church of *England*, have readily agreed to join Hearts and Purse in the Prosecution thereof; and this Union of Hearts and Affections in things so agreeable to all, who deserve the
Name

Name of *Protestants*, of *Christians*, of *Englishmen*, or even of Men, hath been of great Use to remove the Prejudices which many have taken up against the Establish'd Church, as well as against one another, and hath laid a Foundation of that Love and Charity among Christians, which all good Men so mightily long for.

It is by the Endeavours of this Society, assisted by the religious Societies aforesaid, and divers others since formed, and acting under the Influence of it, that many Thousands have been convicted of Swearing, Cursing, Drunkenness, Lewdness, Profanation of the Lord's-Day, &c. in and about the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*; many of whom (at least outwardly) have been reformed thereby; above Three Thousand Persons have been proceeded against this last Year, for keeping common Gaming-Houses, and other lewd and disorderly Houses, exercising their Trades on the Lord's-Day, Swearing, Cursing, Drunkenness, &c.

By these Means our Streets have been very much cleansed of the

lewd Night-Walkers, and other publick Places of the Gangs of detestable Sodomites, and even those Parts of the Town have been very much cleared, which were formerly notorious for the Number of Bawdy-Houses, and the harbouring of lewd and wicked Persons.

Of the Rise, Progress, and Success of these Societies, the World has had an Account, in a Book, entitled, *An Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners in England and Ireland; with a Persuasive to Persons of all Ranks to be zealous and diligent in promoting the Execution of the Laws against Profaneness and Debauchery, for effecting a National Reformation: Published with the Approbation of a considerable Number of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and of the Honourable Judges of both Kingdoms; and also in another Book, entitled, An Account of the Progress of the Reformation of Manners: The former of which Books has been translated into several Languages, for the Promoting a Reformation in other Nations.*

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You will perhaps meet with some Persons that are no great Friends to the Society for *Reformation of Manners*; and 'tis no Wonder; (for they, that are Enemies to God and Religion, will be sure to oppose those that attempt to weaken the Kingdom of Darkneſs) but as the Prejudices that ſome have conceived, are owing in a great Meaſure to their Ignorance of the true Nature of this Deſign, and the wrong Notions they have entertained concerning it; you will do well to recommend to thoſe whom you find diſpoſed to liſten to the Convictions of Truth and Reason, a Book, (which hath been lately written by *John Diſney, Eſq;* a worthy Juſtice of the Peace in *Lincolnſhire*) entitled, *An Eſſay upon the Execution of the Laws againſt Immorality and Profaneſs*; the ſerious Peruſal whereof will, I doubt not, convince any Man, that is not blinded by his Luſts and Paſſions, that the endeavouring to ſuppreſs Immorality and Profaneſs, by proſecuting the Offenders according to Law, is a truly noble and

and Christian Undertaking, and consequently to be countenanced and encouraged by all those, that have any Regard for the Honour of God and the Salvation of Souls.

Whilst these Societies have successfully promoted the Interest of Religion among the Laity, there has not been wanting a Number of well-dispos'd Persons who have endeavoured to assist the Labours of the Clergy, by procuring Benefactions for erecting **Parochial Libraries** in the meanly endowed Cures throughout *England*; accordingly by their Care and Endeavours this Design has been so far advanced, that there are already upwards of 50 Libraries near compleat, consisting of a competent Number of the best Comments on the Holy Scriptures, and the most approved Treatises of practical Divinity.

To secure these Books to all Posterity, as well as to satisfy the Benefactors to this Design, an Act of Parliament passed the last Sessions, *for the better Preservation of Parochial Libraries in that Part of Great*
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Britain called England, whereby such wholesome Provisions are made for preventing Embezlements, as it is hoped will prove effectual for that Purpose.

There remains but one Society more to give you an Account of, before I enter upon what I promised, which is, **The Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts.** This took its Rise at first from *The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.* One great Branch of whose Design originally was, the Promoting Christian Knowledge in our Foreign Plantations; and accordingly, in some short time, with the Assistance of divers well disposed Persons, they procured and made up Eight Hundred Pounds; (of which the *Religious Societies* in and about *London*, contributed one Hundred Pounds) this Eight Hundred Pounds they applied towards providing Bibles, and Common-Prayer-Books, Catechisms, and other religious Treatises, which they transmitted to the several Colonies in *North-America*; as also in
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furnishing several of the Plantations with Parochial Libraries, to invite pious and learned Clergy-Men to go over and reside there. They also (by voluntary Subscriptions) procured a Maintenance for Six Missionaries, who being approved by the *Lord Bishop of London*, went to Preach the Gospel in those Parts: And to render this Undertaking more effectual, they settled Correspondencies with the Clergy and other worthy Persons there, as well as here at Home.

Thus far the Society proceeded in this Affair; but this Design being found too large and extensive, and too great an Undertaking for a few private Persons, His late Majesty, *King William*, upon Application made to him, was graciously pleased, by his *Royal Charter, Anno Dom. 1701.* to incorporate his Grace the present *Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*, and a great Number of other Persons of the greatest Character both in Church and State, together with the then Members of this Society, by the Name of the
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Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, with a Power of Electing new Members, and receiving and disposing of Charities for the Maintenance of an orthodox Clergy in the Plantations, Colonies, and Factories beyond the Seas, belonging to the Kingdom of *England*, and of making such other Provision as may be necessary for the Propagation of the Gospel in those Places.

How much Good they have accordingly since done, and are still doing; and how successful their Endeavours have been in raising Charities, and providing for the Conversion of the Natives and Negroes, as well as the Instruction of the Subjects of *England* in those Parts, will appear by the Accounts they have since published.

This Society meets once a Month at the *Archbishop's Library in St. Martin's in the Fields*; and for the easier Dispatch of Business, a Committee of the Society meet, as there is occasion, at the *Chapter-House at St. Paul's*, in order to prepare Matters against the said monthly Meetings;

ings ; besides which, there is an Annual Meeting of the Corporation at the Vestry at *Bow-Church*, to choose a President, Vice-Presidents, and other Officers, necessary for carrying on their Business ; at which Time they have a Sermon preached by one of their own Members.

By the Account I have now given you of the Corporation, I have let you into the Knowledge of what was originally, as I told you, one Part of the Design of the **Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge** : What remains to be accounted for, is, that other Branch of their Design, *The Promoting Christian Knowledge at Home* : In order to which, I must acquaint you, that the Society began very early to encourage, as much as in them lay, the Setting up of *Charity-Schools*, for the Instruction of poor Children in the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion, as professed and taught in the *Church of England* ; as well knowing, how much the Promoting of Christian Knowledge, and a Conformity to the Precepts of the Gospel, depends upon
a Right

a Right Education of Youth, especially such who through the Poverty or Ignorance of their Parents are in Danger of being abandoned to Ignorance, Idleness, and Vice

There has been within a very few Years a great Progress made in these Schools, which, next to the Blessing of God, has been greatly owing to the Care and prudent Management of the Trustees of the respective Schools; so that in *London, and within Ten Miles thereof*, there are now 87 *Charity-Schools*, in which are taught above 2100 Boys, and more than 1200 Girls, and most of the Children are cloathed; from these Schools there have been about 956 Boys, and upwards of 390 Girls put out Apprentices: Besides many of both Sexes that have been taken as Servants into sober, honest Families, and several Boys admitted into Her Majesties Service at Sea.

Towards the Maintenance of these Schools there is now above 3600*l.* a Year subscribed; besides which there hath been collected at Sermons, upon this Occasion, the last Year above 1900*l.*

Given

Given otherwise in Money at Times about 640*l.* and of Land about 204*l.* per *Annum*.

In the several Counties of *South-Britain*, the Number of Charity-Schools are encreased to near 400. in which about 10000 poor Children are freely taught, many of them are cloathed, some wholly maintained, and divers are placed in several Stations, serviceable and useful to the Publick; but for a more particular Account of these Schools, and of the Methods that are taken for setting them up, I must refer you to an Account of them which is published once a Year: Printed by *Joseph Downing* in *Bartholomew-Close*.

In *North Britain*, an Act of the General Assembly was passed about Four Years ago for settling Charity-Schools in the *High-Lands*; since which Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to issue Her Royal Proclamation, bearing Date the 18th of *August*, 1708. to encourage the Promoting and Erecting Charity-Schools there; and very lately the General Assembly has passed another

ther Act in favour of them, and Her Majesty's Patent is now issuing out, to incorporate a Society for the more effectual Promoting that Design.

Several Charity-Schools have been set up in *Dublin*, in Imitation of those in *London*.

Nor are Her Majesty's Dominions only happy in the successful Endeavours of this sort of Charity.

The *Czar of Muscovy* has also lately erected Schools in several of the great Towns in his Dominions. And *Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland*, and several of the *German Princes*, have made Enquiry about the Methods here used in setting up these Schools. The Reverend Mr. *Henry Plutscho*, and Mr. *Bartholomew Ziegenbalgh*, two *Danish Missionaries*, have at their own Charge, set up a Charity-School at *Tranquebar* in the *East-Indies*, for the Teaching and Instructing the *Malabarian Children* there in the Principles of the Christian Religion; all which may serve to convince us, that this is not only the Work of Men, but that the
Hand

Hand of God is in it: And here I cannot but take Notice of the faithful and surprising Account of the pious Foundation at *Glaucha* near *Hall* in *Saxony*, which from so small a beginning as 18 Shillings and 6 Pence, dropt into an Alms-Box fixed at the Study-Door of the Reverend *Augustus Hermannus Franck*, Minister there, is now by seasonable and unexpected Supplies (as God opened the Hearts and Hands of Neighbours and Strangers) grown so large as to become a sort of University.

Another Branch of the Design of this Society has been the *Dispersing of Religious Books, especially amongst the poorer sort of People*; as Bibles, Common Prayer-Books, Church-Catechisms, with some Expositions thereof; others relating to Worship, as Family-Prayers, Confirmation, and frequent Communion; likewise such as treat of the Duties of Repentance and Restitution, &c. of the Evil and dangerous Consequences of common Vices, as profane Swearing, Drunkenness, Uncleaness, Profanation of the

the Lord's Day, &c. as also his Grace the Archbishop of *Canterbury's* Letter to the Clergy; whose pious and fatherly Instructions and Recommendations therein have been of extraordinary Use for the exciting and encouraging the Clergy and Laity, in their several Stations, to oppose and discountenance the Profaneness and Immorality of the present Age: Great Numbers of these and the like Tracts (many of which have been printed at the Charge of the Society) have been distributed amongst the Seamen and Soldiers at home and abroad, to the Sick and Wounded in Hospitals, to Prisoners, to Persons imployed in the Work-Houses, and to the Poor in other Places.

The Society have likewise sent Specimens of several small practical and devotional Treatises to their corresponding Members in the Country, that pious and charitable Persons might be encouraged by the Lowness of the Price (of which there is a Catalogue printed for that Purpose) to distribute them amongst the Poor;

Poor; and accordingly by this Means, not only the Correspondents, but several others have bought up and distributed great Numbers of these small Tracts, as also some Quantities of Bibles, and Common-Prayer-Books. Besides which several useful Books have been translated into the *Welsh* Language, and dispersed in *Wales*.

The Success that has attended this Design of dispersing small Tracts among the poorer sort gives us great Reason to hope, that a diligent Pursuit of it will by degrees (through the Blessing of God) bring the Generality of the common People to a good Sense of the Importance of Religion, and a serious Concern for their everlasting Welfare.

The Society are so fully convinced of the Reasonableness of such Hopes, that they have extended their Charity of this kind to other Parts; and have sent Packets of these little Books into *Ireland*, *New-England*, *Holland*, *Switzerland*, and other Foreign Countries; for which End, they have also procured several useful
Books

Books to be translated into some Foreign Languages; which has had so good an Effect, that the King of *Prussia*, being presented with the Translation of the Soldier's Monitor, was pleased to express a great Liking of it, and ordered it to be dispersed through his Army. The King of *Sweden* has done the same, with the Addition of the *Kind Caution to Profane Swearers*, at the End of it. The *Land-Grave* of *Hesse-Cassel* some time ago ordered Four Thousand of the same to be printed for the Use of his Soldiers: And 'tis to be hoped, these Examples will be followed by many others.

Another Design which the Society has engaged in, has been the Erecting *Libraries in Wales*, where they observing there are a great Number of Benefices which are insufficient for the Maintenance of a Minister, and that in many of them the Clergy are not well able to furnish themselves with Books, they thought it would be a Means of promoting our holy Religion, to fix *Lending Libraries* in the several Market-

Market-Towns within each County of the Four Diocesses in *Wales*, and also *Lending Libraries* in each poor Rectory, Vicaridge, and Curacy, for the Benefit of such of the Clergy, who could not resort to the Lending Libraries: Accordingly they printed Proposals to encourage well disposed Persons to contribute Money or Books for that Purpose, and several of the Lords the Bishops, whose Names are mentioned in the Proposals, having been pleased to be Trustees in this Affair, it has met with that Encouragement, that the Society has already set up a Lending Library to the Value of 60 Pounds and upwards, in the Town of *Cardmarthen*, in the Diocese of *St. David's*; And they are now going on to fix Three more of the same Nature in the other Diocesses, after which they intend (God willing) to proceed to the Fixing of *Parochial Libraries*, according to the said Proposals,

And because it may be a Satisfaction to those worthy Persons, who have contributed towards this Design, as well as an Encouragement to

to others to do the like, the Society has printed an Abstract of the Deed of Trust relating to the *Carmarthen Library*, by which it will appear what Care is taken for preserving the Books, and preventing the Imbezlement thereof.

The Society acknowledge with great Thankfulness the Goodness of God in the Success that he has been pleased to give to their Endeavours; and as they cannot but be pleased to see that they are any ways instrumental in promoting the Interest of Religion, so they heartily wish there were more Societies of this kind in other Parts of the Kingdom, especially among the Clergy; it having been observed, that wherever the Clergy have united together in Societies, pursuant to the Directions of his Grace the Lord *Archbishop of Canterbury*, there are few or no Instances of such Union, which have not made some tolerable Step towards the Reviving of Religion; either by a stricter Conformity among themselves to the Canons and Rubricks of our Church;

or by promoting Lending Libraries or Schools, or the dispersing of pious Books, or by more frequent Communion, or by a more than ordinary Diligence in catechizing, or by a frequent Attendance on the Publick Prayers of the Church, or by charitable Contributions to the Poor, or by suppressing Profaneness and Immorality.

In short, *Sir*, nothing less than an united Force seems sufficient to bear up against the great Power of Vice and Irreligion that has broke in upon us; for as the excellent *Author of the Whole Duty of Man*, in his *Decay of Christian Piety*, observes, “ The Scandal which we have brought upon Religion, as it was not contracted by the Irregularities of one or two Persons, but by *associated and common Crimes*, so neither will it be removed by a few single and private Reformations. There must be Combinations and publick Confederacies in Virtue to ballance and counterpoise those of Vice, or they will never recover that Honour, which she

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“ acquired by the general Piety of
 “ her Professors. Upon a full Con-
 viction of this Truth, the Society
 has recommended to their corre-
 sponding Members the forming *Soc-*
ieties of this kind in the Country,
 and they hope, not without some
 Success.

This, *Sir*, is a short Account of
 our Society, to which I think I
 need add nothing farther, than to
 acquaint you that this Society (as
 many other things of the like kind,
 which are now considerable, have
 done) took its Rise from a very
 small Beginning; a few private Gen-
 tlemen of the Church of *England*,
 about the Beginning of the Year
 1699, met together, to consult up-
 on Methods for Promoting the real
 and practical Knowledge of true
 Religion; which being a Design of
 so excellent a Nature, many others
 very readily came into it; and
 blessed be God, the Number of their
 residing as well as corresponding
 Members has since greatly increased.

And now, *Sir*, I leave you to judge
 with what Reason the Author of a
 late

late Book, entituled, a *Project for the Advancement of Religion, and the Reformation of Manners*, could publish to the World, That among all the Schemes offered to the Publick in this projecting Age, he has observed with some Displeasure, that there has never been any for the Improvement of Religion and Morals.

May God of his infinite Goodness animate the Zeal, and bless the Designs of all those, who from a serious Concern for their own and others Salvation, are labouring to promote the Knowledge of God, and the Practice of true Religion among us. I am,

SIR,

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With great Sincerity,

July 1st,
1769.

Your affectionate

Humble Servant.

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